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ABSTRACT

Homework is an opportunity for children to learn and for families to be involved with their children's education, but helping children with homework is not always easy. This booklet is designed to provide parents of elementary and middle grades students with an understanding of the purpose and nature of homework and offers suggestions for helping their children complete assignments successfully. The first section of the booklet discusses the "basics" of homework: why teachers assign it, how homework helps children learn, and what is the right amount of homework. The remaining sections discuss how parents can help: (1) show that education and homework are important, includings providing suitable study space, materials and resources, and setting a good example; (2) monitor assignments, including asking about the school's homework policy and looking over completed assignments; (3) provide guidance, including helping the child get organized, and watching for frustration; and (4) talking with teachers to resolve problems, including telling the teacher of parents' concerns. The booklet concludes with a list of pertinent resources, federal sources of information for children with learning disabilities, and a checklist for helping with homework. (HTH)

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Rod Paige
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Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs
Laurie M. Rich
Assistant Secretary

John McGrath
Senior Director for Community Services and Partnerships

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Children's books and magazines are mentioned in this booklet as examples and are only a few of many appropriate children's books and periodicals. Other materials mentioned are provided as resources and examples for the reader's convenience. Listing of materials and resources in this book should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement by the Department of any private organization or business listed herein.

Helping Your Child with Homework

For parents of children in elementary through middle school

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

Foreword

Research shows clearly that children are more likely to succeed in learning when their families actively support them. When family members read with their children, talk with their teachers, participate in school or other learning activities and help them with homework, they give children a tremendous advantage.

At the heart of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* is a promise to raise standards for all children and to help all children meet those standards. In support of this goal, President George W. Bush is committed to promoting the very best teaching programs. Well-trained teachers and instruction that is based on research, can bring the best teaching approaches and programs to all children and help to ensure that "no child is left behind." However, the hours in a school day are few and the time a teacher can spend with any one child is limited. Teachers need the understanding and help of families in supporting classroom instruction. One important way that families can lend this support is by taking an interest in the homework that their children bring home and by finding the most effective ways to help their children with that homework.

Homework has been part of students' lives since the beginning of formal schooling in the United States. It is important because it can improve children's thinking and memory. It can help them to develop positive study skills and habits that will serve them well throughout their lives. It can encourage them to use time well, to learn independently and to take responsibility for their work.

Helping children with their homework benefits families as well. It can, for example, be a way for families to learn more about what their children are learning in school and an opportunity for them to communicate both with their children and with teachers and principals.

Your interest in your children's education can spark their enthusiasm and lead them to understand that learning can be rewarding and is well worth the effort. We hope that you and your child find this booklet helpful.

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"If you expect your child to be well-educated, you have the responsibility of making sure your child gets educated, starting at home, with some basic fundamentals."

— President George W. Bush

Homework: A Concern for the Whole Family ★

Homework is an opportunity for children to learn and for families to be involved in their children's education. However, helping children with homework isn't always easy. At parent-teacher meetings and in conferences with parents, teachers often hear questions such as:

* How can I get Michael to do his homework? Every night it's a struggle to get him to turn off the TV and do his homework.
* Why isn't Maria getting more homework?
* Why is Jonathan getting so much homework?
* When is Suki supposed to do homework? She takes piano lessons, sings in her church choir, plays basketball and helps with family chores. There's hardly any time left to study.
* How can I help Robert with his math homework when I don't understand it?
* Do homework assignments really help my child learn?

This booklet helps answer these and other questions that parents, family members and others who care for children in elementary and middle school often ask about homework. The booklet also includes practical ideas for helping children to complete homework assignments successfully.

The Basics

Before discussing ways that you can help your child with homework, it is important to discuss why teachers assign homework and how it benefits your child.

Why Do Teachers Assign Homework?

Teachers assign homework for many reasons. Homework can help their students

* review and practice what they've covered in class;
* get ready for the next day's class;
* learn to use resources, such as libraries, reference materials and computer Web sites to find information about a subject;
* explore subjects more fully than classroom time permits;
* extend learning by applying skills they already have to new situations; and
* integrate their learning by applying many different skills to a single task, such as book reports or science projects.

Homework also can help students to develop good study habits and positive attitudes. It can

* teach them to work independently; and
* encourage self-discipline and responsibility (assignments provide some children with their first chance to manage time and to meet deadlines).

In addition, homework can help create greater understanding between families and teachers and provide opportunities for increased communication. Monitoring homework keeps families informed about what their children are learning and about the policies and programs of the teacher and the school.

Does Homework Help Children Learn?

Homework helps your child do better in school when the assignments are meaningful, are completed successfully and are returned to her* with constructive comments from the teacher. An assignment should have a specific purpose, come with clear instructions, be fairly well matched to a child's abilities and help to develop a child's knowledge and skills.

In the *early grades,* homework can help children to develop the good study habits and positive attitudes described earlier. From *third through sixth grades,* small amounts of homework, gradually increased each year, may support improved school achievement. In *seventh grade and beyond,* students who complete more homework score better on standardized tests and earn better grades, on the average, than do students who do less homework. The difference in test scores and grades between students who do more homework and those who do less increases as students move up through the grades.

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* **Please note:** In this booklet, we refer to a child as "him" in some places and "her" in others. We do this to make the booklet easier to read. Please understand, however, that every point that we make is the same for girls and boys.

What's the Right Amount of Homework?

The right amount of homework depends on the age and skills of the child. National organizations of parents and teachers suggest that children in *kindergarten through second grade* can benefit from 10 to 20 minutes of homework each school day. In *third through sixth grades,* children can benefit from 30 to 60 minutes a school day. In *seventh through ninth grades,* students can benefit from spending more time on homework and the amount may vary from night to night.

Amounts that vary from these guidelines are fine for some children and in some situations. For example, because reading at home is especially important for children, reading assignments might push the time on homework a bit beyond the amounts suggested here.

If you are concerned that your child has either too much or too little homework, talk with his teacher and learn about her homework policies.

How to Help:
Show That You Think Education and Homework Are Important

Children need to know that their family members think homework is important. If they know their families care, children have a good reason to complete assignments and to turn them in on time. You can do many things to show your child that you value education and homework.

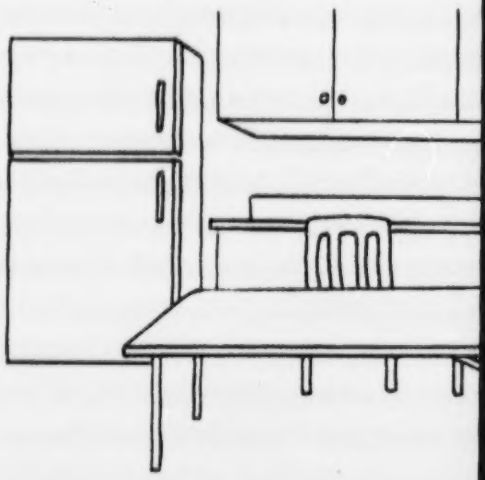
Set a Regular Time for Homework

Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish assignments. The best schedule is one that works for your child and your family. What works well in one household may not work in another. Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child's age as well as her specific needs. For instance, one child may do homework best in the afternoon, completing homework first or after an hour of play, and another may do it best after dinner. However, don't let your child leave homework to do just before bedtime.

Your child's outside activities, such as sports or music lessons, may mean that you need a flexible homework schedule. Your child may study after school on some days and after dinner on others. If there isn't enough time to finish homework, your child may need to drop some outside activity. Let her know that homework is a high priority.

You'll need to work with your elementary school child to develop a schedule. An older student can probably make up a schedule independently, although you'll want to make sure that it's a workable one. You may find it helpful to write out his schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often, such as on the refrigerator door.

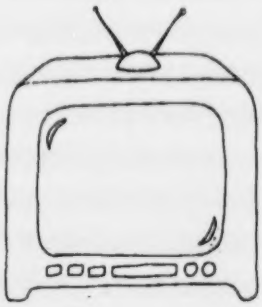
Some families have a required amount of time that their children must devote to homework or some other learning activities each school night (the length of time can vary depending upon the child's age). For instance, if your seventh grader knows she's expected to spend an hour doing homework, reading or visiting the library, she may be less likely to rush through assignments so that she can watch TV. A required amount of time may also discourage her from "forgetting" to bring home assignments and help her adjust to a routine.



Pick a Place

Your child's homework area doesn't have to be fancy. A desk in the bedroom is nice, but for many children, the kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine. The area should have good lighting and it should be fairly quiet.

Your child may enjoy decorating a special area for homework. A plant, a brightly colored container to hold pencils and some favorite artwork taped to the walls can make homework time more pleasant.



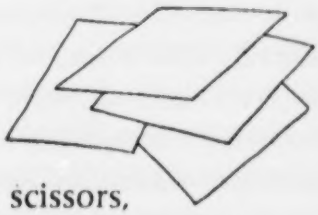
Remove Distractions

Turn off the TV and discourage your child from making and receiving social telephone calls during homework time. (A call to a classmate about an assignment, however, may be helpful.)

Some children work well with quiet background music, but loud noise from the CD player, radio or TV is not OK. One history teacher laments, "I've actually had a kid turn in an assignment that had written in the middle, 'And George Washington said, "Ohhhhh, I love you."' The kid was so plugged into the music that he wasn't concentrating."

If you live in a small or noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time. You may need to take a noisy toddler outside or into another room to play. If distractions can't be avoided, your child may want to complete assignments in the local library.

Provide Supplies and Identify Resources



Have available pencils, pens, erasers, writing paper and a dictionary. Other supplies that might be helpful include a stapler, paper clips, maps, a calculator, a pencil sharpener, tape, glue, paste, scissors, a ruler, a calculator, index cards, a thesaurus and an almanac. If possible, keep these items together in one place. If you can't provide your child with needed supplies, check with her teacher, school guidance counselor or principal about possible sources of assistance.

For books and other information resources, such as suitable computer Web sites, check with the school library or your local public library. Some libraries have homework centers designed especially to assist children with school assignments (they may even have tutors and other kinds of individual assistance).

You may want to ask your child's teacher to explain school policy about the use of computers for homework. Certainly, computers are great learning and homework tools. Your child can use her computer not only for writing reports and for getting information through Internet resource sites, but for "talking" with teachers and classmates about assignments. In many schools, teachers post information about homework assignments and class work on their own Web sites, which also may have an electronic bulletin board on which students can post questions for the teacher and others to answer. (For more information about using the Internet, see the U.S. Department of Education's booklet, Parents' Guide to the Internet, listed in the Resources section, page 23.) However, you don't have to have a computer in your home for your child to complete homework assignments successfully. Some schools may offer after-school programs that allow your child to use the school computers. And many public libraries make computers available to children.

Set a Good Example

Show your child that the skills he is learning are an important part of the things he will do as an adult. Let him see you reading books, newspapers and computer screens; writing reports, letters, e-mails and lists; using math to balance your checkbook or to measure for new carpeting; doing other things that require thought and effort. Tell your child about what you do at work.

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Help your child to use everyday routines to support the skills he is learning—for example, teach him to play word and math games; help him to look up information about things in which he is interested—singers, athletes, cars, space travel and so forth; and talk with him about what he sees and hears as the two of you walk through the neighborhood, go shopping at the mall or visit a zoo or museum.

Be Interested and Interesting

Make time to take your child to the library to check out materials needed for homework (and for enjoyment) and read with your child as often as you can. Talk about school and learning activities in family conversations. Ask your child what was discussed in class that day. If she doesn't have much to say, try another approach. For example, ask her to read aloud a story she wrote or to talk about what she found out from a science experiment.

Attend school activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, plays, concerts, open houses and sports events. If you can, volunteer to help in your child's classroom or at special events. Getting to know some of your child's classmates and their parents builds a support network for you and your child. It also shows your child that his home and school are a team.

How to Help: Monitor Assignments

Children are more likely to complete homework successfully when parents monitor their assignments. How closely you need to monitor your child depends upon her age, how independent she is and how well she does in school. Whatever the age of your child, if she is not getting assignments done satisfactorily, she requires more supervision.

Here are some ways to monitor your child's assignments.

Ask about the School's Homework Policy

At the start of the school year, ask your child's teacher about any rules or guidelines that children are expected to follow as they complete homework. Ask about the kinds of assignments that will be given and the purposes for the assignments.

Talk with the teacher about your role in helping with homework. Expectations for parent involvement vary from teacher to teacher. Some teachers want parents to monitor homework closely, whereas others want them simply to check to make sure the assignment is completed on time.

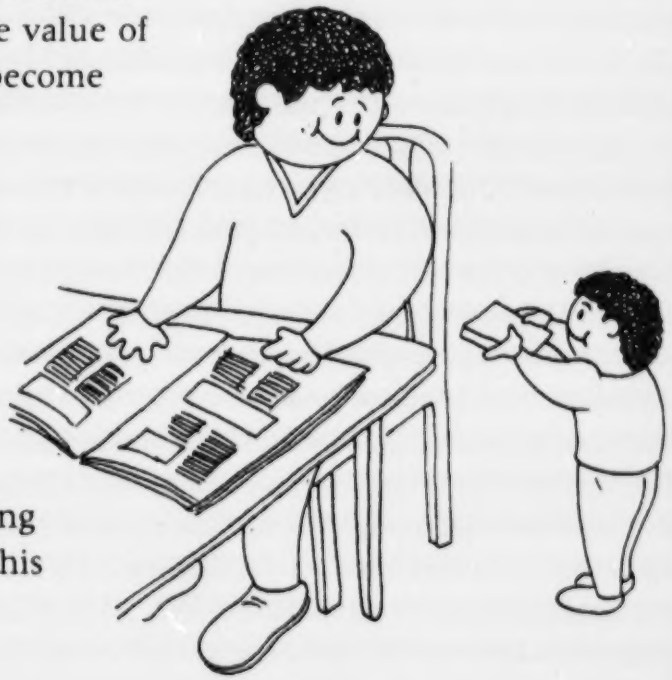
Ask the teacher to call if any problems with homework come up. Let her know that you will do the same.

Some teachers want parents to monitor homework closely, whereas others want them simply to check to make sure the assignment is completed on time.

Be Available

Many elementary school students often like to have someone with them to answer questions as they work on assignments. If your child is cared for by someone else, talk to that caregiver about how to deal with homework. For an older child, if no one will be around, let him know when you want him to begin work and call to remind him if necessary.

However, if the teacher has made it known that students are to do homework on their own, limit your assistance to your child to assuring that assignments are clear and that necessary supplies are provided. Too much parent involvement can make children dependent—and takes away from the value of homework as a way for children to become independent and responsible.



Look over Completed Assignments

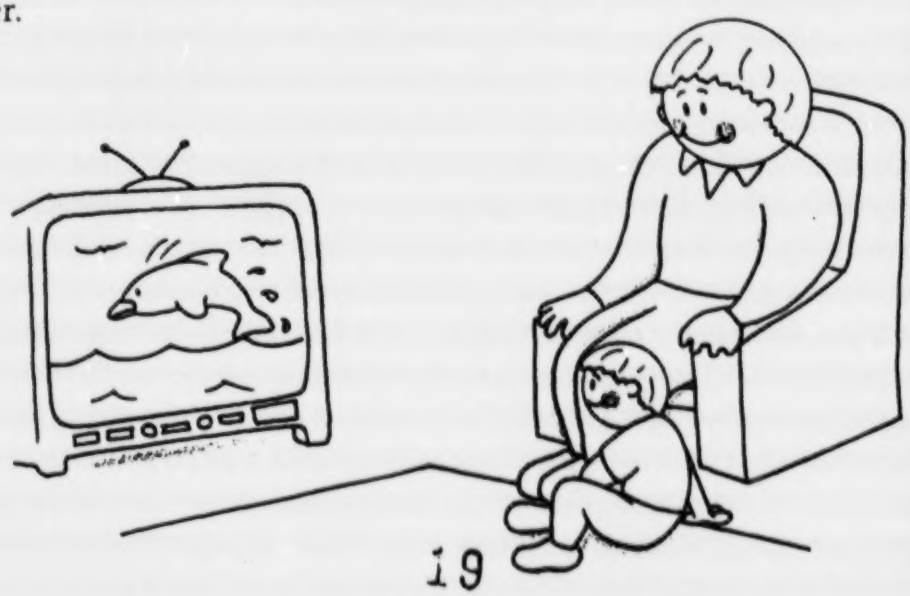
It's usually a good idea to check to see that your elementary school child has finished her assignments. If your middle-school student is having trouble finishing assignments, check his work, too. After the teacher returns completed homework, read the comments to see if your child has done the assignment satisfactorily.

Monitor Time Spent Viewing TV and Playing Video Games

American children, on average, spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework. In many homes, more homework gets done when TV viewing and "game" time is limited.

Once you and your child have worked out a homework schedule, take time to discuss how much TV and what programs she can watch. It's worth noting that television can be a learning tool. Look for programs that relate to what your child is studying in school, such as programs on history or science or dramatizations of children's literature. When you can, watch shows with your child, discuss them and encourage follow-up activities such as reading or a trip to the museum.

Likewise, limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. As with TV programs, be aware of the games she likes to play and discuss her choices with her.



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How to Help: Provide Guidance

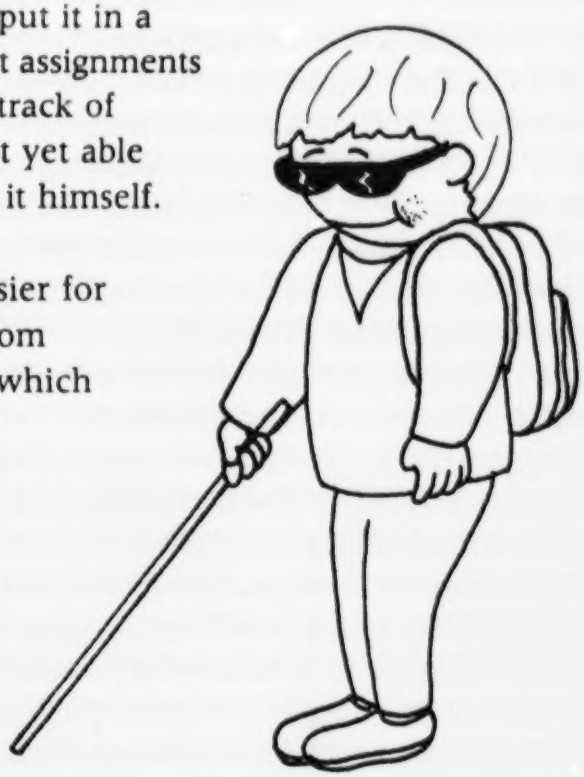
The basic rule is, "Don't do the assignments yourself." It's not your homework—it's your child's. "I've had kids hand in homework that's in their parents' handwriting," one eighth-grade teacher complains. Doing assignments for your child won't help him understand and use information. And it won't help him become confident in his own abilities.

Here are some ways that you can provide guidance without taking over your child's homework.

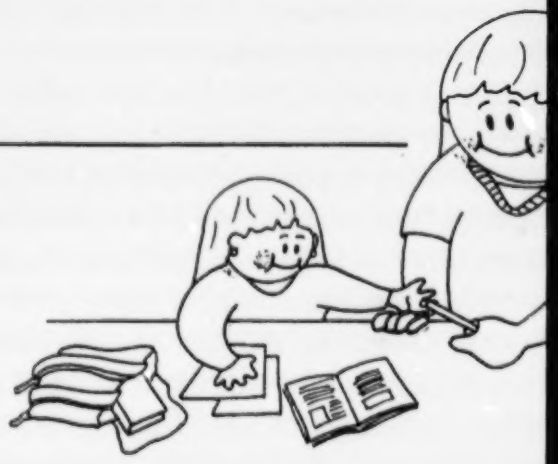
Help Your Child Get Organized

Help your child to make a schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often. Writing out assignments will get him used to the idea of keeping track of what's due and when. If your child is not yet able to write, write it for him until he can do it himself.

A book bag or backpack will make it easier for your child to carry homework to and from school. Providing homework folders in which your child can tuck his assignments for safekeeping also can help him to stay organized.



Encourage Good Study Habits



Teachers generally give students tips on how to study. But it takes time and practice to develop good study habits. To reinforce good habits at home, you can:

* Help your child manage time to complete assignments. For example, if your eighth grader has a biology report due in three weeks, discuss all the steps she needs to take to complete it on time, including:

1. selecting a topic;
2. doing the research by looking up books and other materials on the topic and taking notes;
3. figuring out what questions to discuss;
4. drafting an outline;
5. writing a rough draft; and
6. revising and completing the final draft.

Encourage your child to make a chart that shows how much time she expects to spend on each step.

* Help your child to get started when he has to do research reports or other big assignments. Encourage him to use the library. If he isn't sure where to begin, tell him to ask the librarian for suggestions. If he's using a computer for online reference resources—whether the computer is at home, school or the library—make sure he's getting

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whatever help he needs to use it properly and to find age-appropriate Web sites. Many public libraries have homework centers with tutors or other kinds of one-on-one assistance. After your child has completed the research, listen as he tells you the points he wants to make in the report.

* Give practice tests. Help your third grader prepare for a spelling test by saying the words as she writes them. Have her correct her own test as you spell each word.
* Help your child avoid last-minute cramming. Review with your fifth grader how and what to study for his social studies test long before it's to be given. You can have him work out a schedule of what he needs to do to, make up a practice test and write down answers to the questions he's made up.
* Talk with your child about how to take a test. Be sure she understands how important it is to read the instructions carefully, to keep track of the time and to avoid spending too much time on any one question. (See the **Resources** section, page 23, for the titles of books and pamphlets that give more tips on how your child can get organized and develop good study habits.)

Encourage him to use the library. If he isn't sure where to begin, tell him to ask the librarian for suggestions.

Talk about the Assignments

Talking and asking questions can help your child to think through an assignment and break it down into small, manageable parts. Here are some questions to ask.

- Do you understand what you're supposed to do? After your child has read the instructions, ask her to tell you in her own words what the assignment is about. (If she can't read yet, the teacher may have sent home instructions that you can read to her.) Some schools have homework hotlines that you can call or Web sites that you can access by computer for assignments in case your child misplaced a paper or was absent on the day it was given. If your child doesn't understand the instructions, read them with her and talk about the assignment. Does it have words that she doesn't know? How can she find out what the words mean? If neither you nor your child understands an assignment, call one of her classmates or get in touch with the teacher.
- Do you need help in understanding how to do this assignment? See if your child needs to learn more, for example, about subtracting fractions before she can do her assignment. Or find out if the teacher needs to explain to her again when to use different kinds of punctuation marks. If you understand the subject yourself, you may want to work through some examples with your child. However, always let her do the assignment herself.

- Do you have everything you need to do the assignment? Sometimes your child needs special supplies, such as colored pencils, metric rulers, calculators, maps or reference books. Check with the teacher, school guidance counselor or principal for possible sources of assistance if you can't provide the needed supplies. Check with your local library or school library for books and other information resources.
- Does your answer make sense to you? To check that your child understands what he is doing, ask him to explain how he solved a math problem or have him summarize what he has written in a report.

Watch for Frustration

If your child shows signs of frustration, let him take a break. Encourage him and let him see that you know he can do the work.

Give Praise

People of all ages respond to praise. And children need encouragement from the people whose opinions they value most—their families. "Good first draft of your book report!" or "You've done a great job" can go a long way toward motivating your child to complete assignments.

Children also need to know when they haven't done their best work. However, make criticism constructive. Instead of telling a sixth grader, "You aren't going to hand in that mess, are you?" say, "The teacher will understand your ideas better if you use your best handwriting." Then give praise when the child finishes a neat version.

How to Help: Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems

Homework problems often can be avoided when families and caregivers value, monitor and guide their children's work on assignments. Sometimes, however, helping in these ways is not enough. If you have problems, here are some suggestions for how to deal with them.

Tell the Teacher about Your Concerns

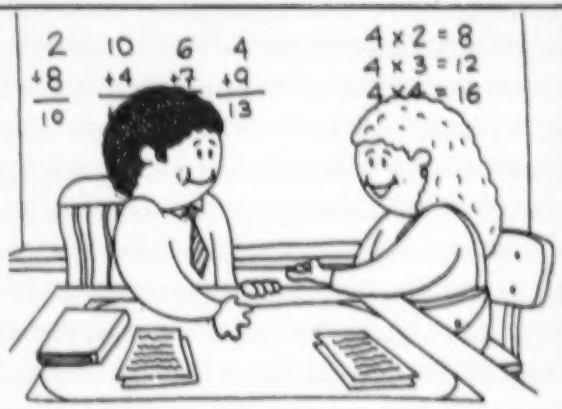
You may want to contact the teacher if

- your child refuses to do her assignments, even though you've tried hard to get her to do them;
- the instructions are unclear;
- you can't seem to help your child get organized to finish the assignments;
- you can't provide needed supplies or materials;
- neither you nor your child can understand the purpose of the assignments;
- the assignments are too hard or too easy;
- the homework is assigned in uneven amounts—for instance, no homework is given on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, but on Thursday four assignments are made that are due the next day; or
- your child has missed school and needs to make up assignments.

Most elementary and middle schools hold regular parent-teacher conferences or open houses.

In some cases, the school guidance counselor or principal also may be helpful in resolving problems.

Work with the Teacher



Continuing communication with teachers is very important in solving homework problems. As you work with your child's teacher, here are some important things to remember:

* Talk with each of your child's teachers early in the school year. Get acquainted before problems arise and let each teacher know that you want to be kept informed. Most elementary and middle schools hold regular parent-teacher conferences or open houses. If your child's school doesn't provide such opportunities, call the teacher to set up a meeting.
* Contact the teacher as soon as you suspect your child has a homework problem (as well as when you think he's having any major problems with his schoolwork). Schools have a responsibility to keep you informed about your child's performance and behavior and you have a right to be upset if you don't find out until report-card time that your child is having difficulties. On the other hand, you may figure out that a problem exists before the teacher does. By alerting the teacher, you can work together to solve a problem in its early stages.
* Request a meeting with the teacher to discuss homework problems. Tell him briefly why you want to meet. You might say, "Rachel is having trouble with her math homework. I'm worried about why she can't finish the problems and what we might do to help her." If English is your second language, you may need to make special arrangements, such as including in the meeting someone who is bilingual.

- Approach the teacher with a cooperative spirit. Believe that the teacher wants to help you and your child, even if you disagree about something. Don't go to the principal without giving the teacher a chance to work out the problem with you and your child.
- Let the teacher know whether your child finds the assignments too hard or too easy. (Teachers also like to know when their students are particularly excited about an assignment.) Of course, not all homework assignments can be expected to interest your child and be perfectly suited to her. Teachers just don't have time to tailor homework to the individual needs of each student. However, most teachers want to assign homework that their students can complete successfully and they welcome feedback.

Many teachers structure homework so that a wide range of students will find assignments interesting. For example:

—They offer students options for different approaches to the same topic or lesson;

—They give extra assignments to students who want more challenge; and

—They give specialized assignments to students who are having trouble in a particular area.

* During your meeting with the teacher, explain what you think is going on. In addition, tell the teacher if you don't know what the problem is. Sometimes a student's version of what's going on isn't the same as the teacher's version. For example, your child may tell you that the teacher never explains assignments so that he can understand them. But the teacher may tell you that your child isn't paying attention when assignments are given.
* Work out a way to solve or lessen the problem. The strategy will depend on what the problem is, how severe it is and what the needs of your child are. For instance:

—Is the homework often too hard? Maybe your child has fallen behind and will need extra help from the teacher or a tutor to catch up.

—Does your child need to make up a lot of work because of absences? The first step might be working out a schedule with the teacher.

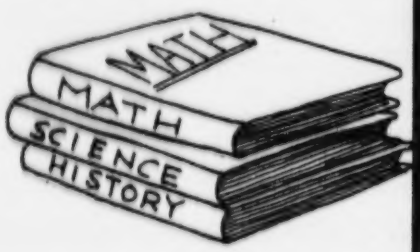
—Does your child need extra support beyond what home and school can give her? Ask the teacher, school guidance counselor or principal if there are mentor programs in your community. Mentor programs pair a child with an adult volunteer who assists with the child's special needs. Many schools, universities, community organizations, churches and businesses offer excellent mentoring programs.

* Make sure that communication is clear. Listen to the teacher and don't leave until you're sure that you understand what's being said. Make sure, too, that the teacher understands what you have to say. If, after the meeting, you realize you don't understand something, call the teacher to clarify.

  At the end of the meeting, it may help to summarize what you've agreed to do:

  "OK, so to keep track of Kim's assignments, I'll check her assignment book each night and write my initials beside new assignments. Each day you'll check to make sure she's written down all new assignments in her book. That way we'll be certain that I know what her assignments are."

* Follow up to make sure that the approach you agreed to is working. If the teacher told you, for example, that your child needs to spend more time practicing long division, check back in a month to talk about your child's progress.



Homework can bring together children, families and teachers in a common effort to improve children's learning.

Helping your child with homework is an opportunity to improve your child's chances of doing well in school and life. By helping your child with homework, you can help him learn important lessons about discipline and responsibility. You can open up lines of communication—between you and your child and you and the school. You are in a unique position to help your child make connections between school work and the "real world," and thereby bring meaning (and some enjoyment) to your child's homework experience.

Resources

The following publications provide more information about how to help your child with homework.

Canter, Lee and Hausner, Lee. (1993). Homework without Tears: *A Parent's Guide for Motivating Children to Do Homework and to Succeed in School.* New York: HarperCollins.

Cholden, Harriet, Friedman, John A. and Tiersky, Ethel. (1998). *The Homework Handbook: Practical Advice You Can Use Tonight to Help Your Child Succeed Tomorrow.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cooper, Harris M. (2001). *The Battle over Homework: Common Ground for Administrators, Teachers and Parents.* New York: Corwin Press.

Klavan, Ellen. (1992). *Taming the Homework Monster: How to Stop Fighting with Your Kids over Homework.* New York: Poseidon Press.

National Parent Teacher Association and the National Education Association. (1995). *Helping Your Student Get the Most Out of Homework.* (Available from the PTA Web site: http://www.pta.org/programs/edulibr/homework.htm).

Rich, Dorothy. (1992). *Megaskills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond* (rev. ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Homework Tips for Parents.* (Available from the Department's Web site:http://www.nclb.gov/parents/homework/index.html).

U.S. Department of Education. (1997). *Parents Guide to the Internet.* (Available from the Department's Web site: http://www.ed.gov/parents/internet).

Federal Sources of Assistance If Your Child Has a Learning Disability

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
Toll Free: 1–800–328–0272
http://www.ericec.org/

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20542
Phone: 202–707–5100
http://www.loc.gov/nls/

★ National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 3006
Rockville, MD 20847
Toll Free: 1–800–370–2943
http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/publications.htm

★ National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013–1492
Toll Free: 1–800–695–0285 (voice & TTY)
http://www.nichcy.org

★ Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202
202–205–5465
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/

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Checklist for Helping Your Child With Homework

1. Show That You Think Education and Homework Are Important

___ Do you set a regular time every day for homework?

___ Does your child have the papers, books, pencils and other things needed to do assignments?

___ Does your child have a well-lit, fairly quiet place to study?

___ Do you set a good example by showing your child that the skills he is learning are an important part of the things he will do as an adult?

___ Do you stay in touch with your child's teacher?

2. Monitor Assignments

___ Do you know what your child's homework assignments are? How long they should take? How the teacher wants you to be involved in them?

___ Do you see that your child starts and completes assignments?

___ Do you read the teacher's comments on assignments that are returned?

___ Is TV viewing or video game playing cutting into your child's homework time?

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3. Provide Guidance

___ Do you help your child to get organized? Does your child need a schedule or assignment book? A book bag or backpack and a folder for papers?

___ Do you encourage your child to develop good study habits (for example, scheduling enough time for big assignments; making up practice tests)?

___ Do you talk with your child about homework assignments? Does she understand them?

4. Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems

___ Do you meet with the teacher early in the year before any problems arise?

___ If a problem comes up, do you meet with the teacher?

___ Do you cooperate with the teacher to work out a plan and a schedule to solve homework problems?

___ Do you follow up with the teacher and with your child to make sure the plan is working?

Helping your child with homework is an opportunity to improve your child's chances of doing well in school and life.

No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This new law represents his education reform plan and contains the most sweeping changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since it was enacted in 1965. It changes the federal role in education by asking America's schools to describe their success in terms of what each student accomplishes. The act contains the president's four basic education reform principles.

* Stronger accountability for results
* Local control and flexibility
* Expanded options for parents
* An emphasis on effective and proven teaching methods.

In sum, this law—in partnership with parents, communities, school leadership and classroom teachers—will ensure that every child in America receives a great education and that no child is left behind.

For more information on No Child Left Behind, visit the Web site at http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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